

INFANT PROGRAM FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED
Ingham Intermediate School District
2630 West Howell Road
Mason, Michigan 48854

funded under
"HANDICAPPED CHILDREN'S EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAM"
(Title VI--Education of the Handicapped
Part C, Section 623, P.L. 91-230)

Historical Background:

A special education staff member from the Ingham Intermediate Schools office was assigned to identify and work with infant and pre-school physically handicapped children in the rural areas serviced by the Ingham Intermediate School District during the 1971-72 school year.

Personal follow-up of referrals from interested relatives, neighbors, nurses, and doctors revealed an inordinate number of infant blind and severely visually impaired children within the Intermediate area that were receiving no special educational services nor assistance. Although services for the hearing and orthopedically impaired infant were available locally, no programs nor agencies were focusing on the needs of the young visually impaired child or their parents. By November, 1971, fifteen blind or severely visually impaired children below five years of age had been identified as needing some kind of special service and/or assistance.

Parent meetings were initiated by personnel from the Ingham Intermediate office in the late fall of 1971 with the purpose of sharing problems and mutually planning for services for these children. Local

educational programs offered support and assistance to this group. The Michigan School for the Blind offered facilities for a nursery program-- if such was desired. Transportation of children was available through arrangement with the Lansing School District. Neither funds nor staff was available from any source at the time of initial planning.

The Ingham Intermediate School District agreed to release two professional staff members from other assignments to organize and staff a pilot program for these children in January, 1972. Teacher aides were sought and procured from volunteers interested in this program. The Ingham Intermediate School District Board of Education supported this project and need for service and provided funds to pay the aides a minimal hourly salary. Parents assisted in any and all ways possible in order to implement their desires for a program of some kind for their children.

On January 25, 1972, a nursery program for the infant visually impaired child was opened as a pilot program and learning experience for all involved. Children were transported into the nursery program for two half-day sessions per week. Home contacts were made on as regular a basis as possible with the limited personnel assigned to the program. This program was used as a basis for the planning of the present fully-funded nursery and home training program that was implemented, on a full-time basis, in September, 1972, for the 1972-73 school year.

Present Program Description:

The Infant Program for the Visually Impaired, as implemented in September, 1972, consists of two phases:

The Nursery School: Two groups of six-seven children each are brought into a nursery setting four half days per week. There is a morning nursery session (9:15 - 11:15) composed of six infants between two and four years of age, with one teacher, two aides and one volunteer aide. The afternoon nursery session (1:00 - 3:00) is composed of six children between four and five years of age, one teacher and two teacher aides.

Program goals (simply stated) are focused on the following areas of attention:

- a) to develop and assist self-help skills
- b) to develop and assist use of meaningful language
- c) to develop and assist mobility
- d) to develop and assist curiosity and play behavior
- e) to develop and assist social interaction
- f) to develop and assist self awareness

Each nursery teacher, in cooperation with the teacher aides, is responsible for the planning of activities for each child as well as the group activities for her half-day session.

The nursery program is housed in Nandy House, a residential unit for early elementary children, on the campus of the Michigan School for the Blind. This

facility is loaned to the project, for the duration of the project, during the hours that the regular building residents are in school. Nandy House provides a home-like atmosphere for the nursery program experiences of the infant visually impaired. Kitchen, dining room, living room, playroom, bathroom, mud room, plus a covered play area as well as a fully equipped, enclosed outside playground, are all features of this facility. The resources of the Michigan School for the Blind have been extended to the project as needed.

The Home Training Program: The remaining half day is spent, by the nursery teacher, in home visits and parent training activities relative to the children within her nursery session. Home visits are made weekly on each child, and about 1 1/2 hours are spent in working with the parent and child on specific developmental learning tasks relative to the needs of that particular child. Home training activities are closely coordinated with school activities when possible. Parents are informed of the activities of the child and nursery program weekly and encouraged to visit the nursery program as often as they wish.

The nursery teachers also serve as resource persons to regular teachers within local day care or nursery facilities in which some of the visually impaired nursery children are enrolled.

Staff planning, program evaluation, material collection, and record keeping takes place on Friday.

Future Program Description:

It is anticipated that, beginning September, 1973, there will be one nursery session, composed of one teacher, two teacher aides and seven children between two and five years of age. This nursery teacher will continue with the weekly home training and visits to the children within her nursery setting.

A second teacher will continue to be part of the program, however, her role will be that of itinerant resource person to the regular kindergarten and nursery school/day care center personnel relative to the visually impaired children placed in those facilities through the infant program. This teacher will also have the responsibility for the home training program of those children too young to benefit from the nursery program. Teacher aides will be available to this resource teacher to give special, regular assistance to the visually impaired child within either of the above programs as determined by the needs of the child.

Population Served:

Geographic Area: The Ingham Intermediate School District service area is comprised of twelve school districts within Ingham County, as well as portions of the surrounding counties of Clinton, Eaton, and parts of Washtenaw, Shiawassee, and Jackson Counties. This area covers approximately 1,000 square miles and has an approximate 95,000 school age population.

Children and Parents Served by Program: The infant program is designed to serve all blind or severely visually impaired children from 0-5 years of age within the Ingham Intermediate School District service area. At present, the program is serving nine legally blind children and three severely visually impaired through the nursery/home training program, plus supplying differentiated services to eight other visually impaired children and/or their families. These services range from regular written communication with parents of a blind child (formerly with the program and now returned to their home in Turkey), to periodic telephone communication from parents of a blind child some distance outside the Ingham service area. Regular personal home visitations or parents contacts are also carried on with those children/parents too young to benefit from the nursery program, or who are not ready or feeling the need for special assistance at this time. Follow-up contacts are continued on all children from the program now integrated into a regular or special school setting.

The children come from inner city to rural home environments. Black, Chicano, and bilingual children are represented within the program. The family income represented by the children within the program range from welfare dependent to middle socio-economic financial backgrounds.

All parents of the children served by the nursery and home training program, plus some parents receiving other services for their infant visually impaired children, attend the monthly parent meetings. This parent group makes its own program decisions, does much of the program

publicity work, assists in planning for the nursery activities, and selects representatives to serve on the project's Advisory Committee.

An Advisory Committee serves as a general board of review, evaluation, and assistance to the program. Committee membership is composed of representatives from the Parents Group, Michigan School for the Blind, Michigan Department of Education, Michigan Department of Health, Michigan State University, Lansing School District, and Ingham Intermediate School District.

The Infant Program serves as a training location to selected students from the Departments of Educational Psychology, Special Education, and Psychology of Michigan State University. As a pilot program in the education of the visually impaired infant, it also serves as a demonstration project and possible model for others interested in or involved in working with these children. Visitations are welcomed and encouraged. Prior arrangements for visitations are recommended.

The Infant Program for the Visually Impaired is administered and operated by the Ingham Intermediate School District. Funding for this program has been made available by a Federal Grant (Title VI--Education of the Handicapped, Part C, Section 623, P.L. 91-230) plus state and local special education funds.

For further information:

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DESCRIPTION OF CHILDREN IN PROJECT
1972-73

| CHILD | SEX | AGE (2-73) | VISUAL ACUITY | YEARS IN SCHOOL | OTHER HANDICAPS | PARENT COOPERATION | PLACE OF RESIDENCE |
|-------|-----|---------------|------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | M | 2.9 | legally blind | 1 | no | excellent | inner city |
| 2 | M | 3.1 | legally blind | 1 | no | excellent | inner city |
| 3 | F | 3.11 | blind | 1 | suspected | excellent | urban |
| 4 | F | 4.4 | blind | 1 | suspected | excellent | rural |
| 5 | F | 3.10 | blind | 1 | yes | excellent | rural |
| 6 | M | 4.7 | blind | 1 | no | excellent | urban |
| 7 | F | 4.6 | blind | 1 | no | excellent | urban |
| 8 | F | 4.5 | blind | 1 | no | excellent | inner city |
| 9 | F | 4.5 | P.S. | 1 | no | excellent | inner city |
| 10 | M | 4.3 | V.I. | 1 | yes | excellent | urban |
| 11 | F | 4.2 | legally blind | 1 | no | good | urban |
| 12 | F | 5.2 | P.S. | 1/2 | no | good | suburban |

Home Training or Resource Services:

| | | | | | | | |
|----|---|-----|------------------|-----|----|-----------|----------|
| 13 | M | .7 | legally blind | 0 | no | excellent | suburban |
| 14 | M | 1.6 | legally blind | 0 | no | poor | urban |
| 15 | M | 5.6 | blind | 1 | no | good | suburban |
| 16 | M | 5.6 | legally blind | 1/2 | no | good | urban |

Following:

| | | | | | | | |
|----|---|----|------------------|-----|----|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 17 | M | 2. | legally blind | 0 | no | referred to local agency | outside service area |
| 18 | F | 2. | V.I. | 0 | no | contacts | rural |
| 19 | M | 3 | P.S. | 0 | no | contacts | urban |
| 20 | F | | blind | 1/2 | no | excellent | Turkey |